



U.S. Department of Justice

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PRESS RELEASE

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“Peaceaholic” Mentor Found Guilty of Sexual Assault of 15-year-old Spingarn Student

WASHINGTON – Today, a 50-year-old Oxon Hill, MD man, Barry Harrison, was found guilty by a D.C. Superior Court jury of one count of Enticing a Minor with aggravating circumstances, three counts of Second Degree Child Sexual Abuse with aggravating circumstances, and one count of Misdemeanor Child Sexual Abuse with aggravating circumstances, for the April 14, 2009, assault on a fifteen-year-old student at Spingarn Senior High School in Northeast Washington, announced Acting U.S. Attorney Channing Phillips. Harrison is scheduled to be sentenced on November 13, 2009, by Superior Court Judge Michael L. Rankin, and, because of sentencing enhancements due to previous felony convictions, faces up to 30 years each for the enticing and second degree child sex abuse convictions.

The government’s evidence at trial established that the defendant had been assigned as a mentor to Spingarn Senior High School by a community group called “Peaceaholics, Inc.” That group, staffed largely by ex-offenders, provided mentoring services to at-risk students in several D.C. Public High Schools. At the time of the offense, the defendant was on parole for murder. Prior to the offense, the defendant made several sexually suggestive statements to the victim, as well as to three other girls who were also Spingarn students. The defendant told one of the other students, who testified at trial, that he wanted to speak with her privately where they could not be seen by school surveillance cameras. On April 14, 2009, the defendant told the 15-year-old victim that he needed to speak to her. The defendant took the victim to a basement stairwell of the school that lacked a surveillance camera. There, the defendant grabbed the victim’s buttocks, pulled her up against his body and forced her hand to touch his erect penis. The victim ran away and immediately reported the incident.

In announcing the jury’s verdict, Acting U.S. Attorney Phillips commended several officers of the Metropolitan Police Department, including Detective Linda Knight and Investigator William G. Talbert III, and Officers Sylvester Jackson, Alfred Stewart, Wallace Cash, and Sergeant Zenobia McBride. Finally, Acting U.S. Attorney Phillips thanked Larry Grasso of the Intelligence Section of the U.S. Attorney’s Office, Paralegal Jason Manuel and Assistant U.S. Attorney Edward A. O’Connell, who investigated, indicted, and tried the case.

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